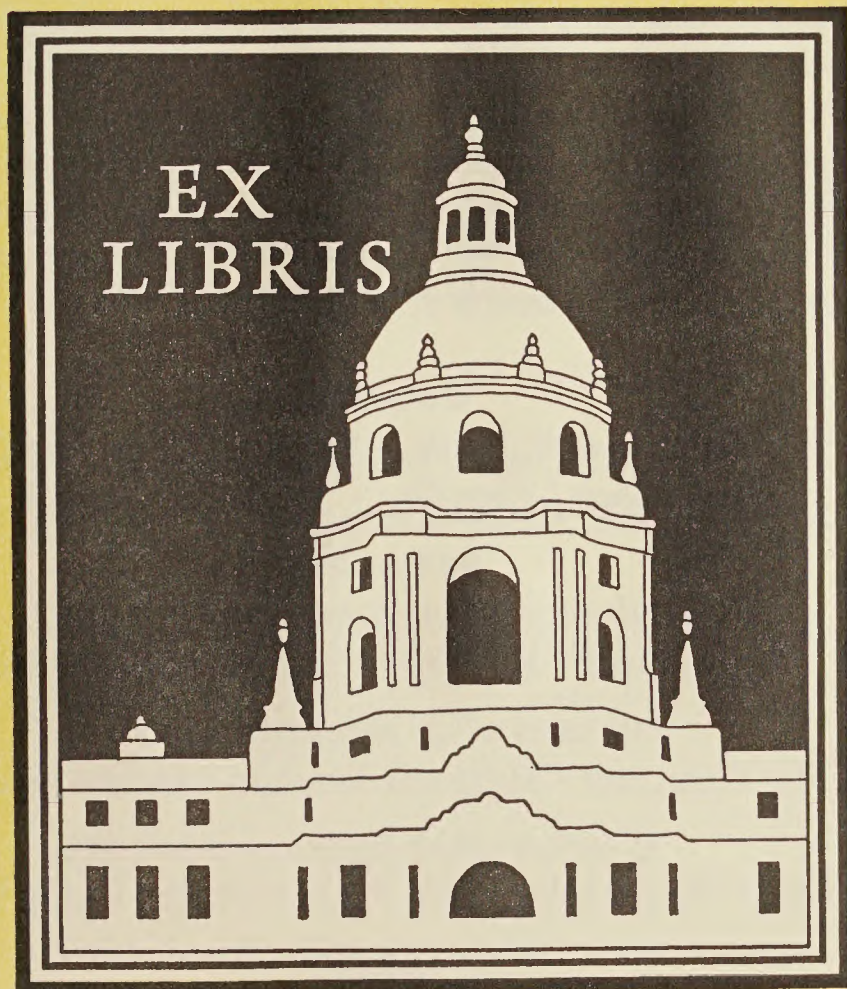


BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA
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BOOK CLUB *of*
CALIFORNIA

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The BOOK CLUB of CALIFORNIA's mission is to support fine printing related to the history and literature of California and the western states of America. It is a membership organization founded in 1912 and known for fine print and research publications alike. The Club reflects the diverse interests of book-minded people and promotes ongoing support of individual and organizational achievements in fine printing and allied arts, with particular focus on the western regions of America. The Club is limited to 1,250 members. When vacancies exist, membership is open to all who agree with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Annual renewals are due by January 1 of every year. Memberships are: Regular, \$95; Sustaining, \$150; Patron, \$250; Sponsor, \$500; Benefactor, \$1,000; 35-and-under, \$35; and Student, \$25. All members receive the *Quarterly News-Letter* and, except for 35-and-under and Student members, the current keepsake. All members have the privilege — but not the obligation — of buying Club publications, which are limited, as a rule, to one copy per member. All members may purchase extra copies of keepsakes or News-Letters, when available. Portions of membership dues — in the amount of \$36 for Regular members, \$91 for Sustaining members, \$191 for Patrons, \$441 for Sponsors, and \$941 for Benefactors — are deductible in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code, as are donations, whether monetary or in the form of books.

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What the Paper Murmurs to the Ink

BCC WAY OUT WEST *Symposium Keynote address by Robert Bringhurst delivered at the Commonwealth Club, Friday October 19, 2012*

I

A hundred years is a venerable age for an organization, just as it is for an individual. So let me say first of all, congratulations. And thank you for inviting me to the party.

A couple of years ago I was handed the pleasant task of writing a short history of the printed book in California. Doing the research for that project, I was struck by a number of things. I was struck by how much of this history there was, despite the fact that printing in California didn't begin until the 1830s, and didn't have a great deal to show for itself until the 1860s or 1870s. I was also struck by how closely the Book Club of California has been involved with virtually every significant figure in California printing, from Edward and Henry Taylor and John Henry Nash to the master printers of the present day. And I was struck by how much the Club has done in its considerable lifetime: by the quality of its books and its *Quarterly News-Letter*, and by the level of conscious attention it has paid to its own history and to the history of printing in California, beginning with Agustín Zamorano and the press he brought to Monterey in 1834. The story of printing in California would be quite different if the Club had not been here, and whatever story it was, we would know much less about it if the Club had not been here. So the Club has several things to be proud of in addition to its age.

Organizations, like individuals, come in a lot of different sizes, shapes and colors. The ones we call governments seem to me rather vegetable-like on the whole. They can be poisonous or thorny, and they can spread like knapweed and thistle, but once they find their niche, they tend to last until some calamity, such as war or climate change, destroys them. Commercial organizations are often more like animals. Most of them depend to some degree on governmental

vegetation for food and shelter, as animals do on the grasslands and forests. But no matter how sheltered they are, their infant mortality is high. Most have no ability to hibernate and therefore need a constant source of food. They are also preyed upon by others of their kind – so even if they do reach adulthood, their life expectancy is modest. Voluntary, noncommercial entities such as this Club are different again. Most are quite small, and they are usually dead within a quarter of a century. Even the largest can perish early – like the League of Nations, which expired at the tender age of 26. And yet a few of them exhibit astounding longevity.

At least one research library I know, the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona, is over 1,500 years of age. Dante worked there for some years before his death in 1321 – and when Dante was there, the Capitolare was already eight centuries old. It was flooded in 1882, bombed in 1945, and like every research library on the planet – and every cultural institution in Italy – it is now chronically short of funds. Nevertheless, the Capitolare is still there, and its doors are still frequently open. The universities of Bologna and Oxford are both getting close to a thousand years old. The Universidad de Salamanca and Cambridge University are over 800. There are also some choirs close to a thousand years old. One of these is at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where Johann Sebastian Bach was the Kantor, or choir director, for nearly half his life. When Bach was hired, in 1723, that choir had been singing for 700 years. And there are at least three European orchestras, and at least four museums, over 500 years old.

Closer to home, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México turned 461 years old this year. The Universidad Benemérita in Puebla turned 425, and its neighbor, the Biblioteca Palafoxiana – the oldest public library in the Americas – turned 366. So while a century is a venerable age, I see no reason why the Book Club should be feeling tired and creaky. It could very well live to be a thousand.

How does it happen that a few organizations live so long when so many others die? Experts in this field tell me that young organizations usually die because they don't know what they're doing, while older organizations tend to die because they do know what they're doing but the environment in which they are doing it has changed. In other words, they die because they're deep in the groove of habit and slow to adapt to new conditions. But that's just a sociological answer. We need mental and physiological answers too.

Those thousand-year-old libraries and choral societies, 900-year-old universities, and 500-year-old orchestras and museums have all had to adapt in the course of their lives – but they've also had to do something more and probably harder.

They've had to remember what they genuinely care about. They've had to hold fast to a vision. In other words, they've had to retain not only their agility but also their idealism, even in great age.

Physiologically, of course, any association of mortal human beings that gets to be as old as Methuselah has to do it through continuous reincarnation. New singers are enrolled every year in the choir of St. Thomas, and every year some other singers leave. At longer intervals – every few years or every few decades – a new director is hired. But the music changes much more slowly, and the liturgical calendar changes more slowly still. It's like what happens in your body, where the skin cells are replaced every few weeks but the bone cells last for decades. Some of the cells in your gut live even briefer lives – ten or twelve hours – but the cells in your cerebral cortex are the same ones you were born with and the only ones you get. Physiologically, they're you. If they die before the rest of you, you have to do without; no replacements will be hired.

In long-lived organizations, all the human parts have to be renewable, though some other parts may not be. If the old books and manuscripts in the Biblioteca Capitolare, or the old sculptures and frescoes in the Vatican Museum, were traded for others or replaced by facsimiles, those institutions would cease to be what they are and become facsimiles themselves.

This, I'm afraid, is exactly what's happening now to a lot of important organizations, young as well as old. They are learning to adapt through self-parody and mutation – learning to survive for survival's sake alone. This is often what we mean when we say that something has been *commercialized*.

It was not so very long ago – only two or three hundred years – that we as a society embraced commercial activity as the major driving force of culture. The difficulty is, while culture and commerce are not at all the same, there is no hard line between them. There isn't any fuzzy line either. Farms, ranches, fishing fleets, market gardens, grocery stores, publishing houses, book stores, clothing stores, transport and delivery services, butcher shops and restaurants, broadcasters, contractors, carpenters and bricklayers all perform essential cultural functions. Cultural amnesia is every bit as dangerous in those profit-making, quotidian domains as it is in libraries, concert halls, theaters, string quartets, universities and museums.

The standard prophylactic against cultural amnesia is the book – and that's a reason why institutions such as the Book Club are important.

There has probably never been a culture in which books do their work alone. In our affluent and acquisitive society, they function in concert with painting

and sculpture, architecture, music and some other things, including the nudge, the wink, the anecdote and the proverb. But the book represents, as nothing else does, the fundamental non-genetic link between the future and the past. And that's what culture is: non-genetic heredity. Culture is the whole web of non-genetic connections between the future and the past.

II

Most of us were raised in a world where the benchmark kind of book consists of sheets of paper, printed on both sides, folded and trimmed and bound along one edge. If we were lucky, we grew up knowing that hardcover books were more physically real and a lot more durable than paperbacks, and that letterpress books were more physically real than books that were printed offset, but that even flimsy paperbacks were more real in their turn than magazines or newspapers. But we also learned that the truth was much more complicated than that. We learned that the cheapest, crummiest copy of *Moby Dick* or *Doctor Zhivago* was far more real than a letterpress, leatherbound vanity-press edition of some incidental text. We learned that the telephone book and the mail-order catalog weren't really books at all, though they had a similar physical form. We learned that a real book has a soul as well as a body.

If we were interested in history, we also learned that writing goes back quite a ways. We learned that books were written in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and in China, Palestine and Greece, a thousand or two thousand years before the earliest printing.

For many people, that's where the thinking has usually stopped: with an image of the book as a lengthy written text with a beginning, middle and end. It might be cuneiform on clay, hieroglyphics on papyrus, vowels and consonants on parchment, or runes on pieces of wood, but it had to be written, because only if it were written could it be read.

There's a lot to be said for that rather strict definition of the book: as a big ecosystem of words, externalized and fixed by means of writing. But I am convinced that books are really much older than writing, and much more universal. I believe that the printed book feels so important because it's really the tip of an iceberg, the familiar material form of a basic cultural necessity. To cultural animals, non-genetic or exogenetic heredity is just as essential, just as important, as genetic heredity is. And the book is the main vehicle of non-genetic heredity. Messing around with the book is like messing around with sex. When people talk about reinventing the book, or replacing the book with some newer,

more sophisticated tool, they might be talking about the nongenetic form of genetic manipulation.

Some printers clearly think about such things, and some evidently do not. I hope that most you will recognize the name Henry Huntly Taylor. Henry was a skilled and very well-educated typographer, a devoted printer, and a founding member of this Club. In 1912, he was the junior partner of Taylor, Nash & Taylor, and from 1915 until his death in 1937, he and his brother were partners in a firm called Taylor & Taylor, one of the best printing establishments California has ever had. Henry Taylor was a perfectionist, but he had a fairly practical cast of mind. In 1927, he wrote the outline of a training manual for printers. Printing, he explained, "is a process of rapid and inexpensive multiplication of manuscript." Twenty years later, Edwin Grabhorn, another great San Francisco printer with a more philosophical and more lyrical turn of mind, defined printing as "a mechanical invention for reproducing thought." *The multiplication of manuscript versus the reproduction of thought.* These might, in some contexts, come to the same thing, but one of them resonates, one of them swings, and the other one doesn't. They lead to different answers to some fairly basic questions, such as *Does printing matter or not – and if so, why?*

In the next generation, another great California printer with an even more metaphysical and spiritual cast of mind, William Everson, raised the rhetorical

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stakes a little further. "Printing," he said, in one of his late lectures, "is relatively meaningless without the book, but books are dangerous things." And in a letter he wrote in 1949, he says,

A poorly printed book is better than the best keepsake ever made. It is better because it is of a superior order of being. Books are the vehicles of ideas, and they hold our civilization. A great book is like nothing else we have – poorly done or beautifully done, it is magnificent. The printer's craft is great because books are great.

This is a reminder that eggs are eggs and chickens are chickens and neither comes first. Books don't exist because of writing or printing, and books didn't bring writing and printing into existence. The relation between the two is more complex. Writing and printing exist because people have found them useful and even, from time to time, amusing – but writing and printing would never have become the magnificent things they sometimes are if it weren't for books – which can indeed, like sex, be dangerous things.

III

The oldest musical instruments yet found are some flutes from southern Germany, dated to roughly 43,000 years before the present. The oldest known examples of representational painting and sculpture are roughly the same age. No one has found any instances of writing that are anywhere near this old. And the dates for the oldest painting, oldest sculpture, and oldest musical instrument are steadily receding as new discoveries are made, while the date for the oldest writing has been stuck for quite some time at about 5,000 years before the present. The big revelation to come from recent research into the history of writing has been a kind of geographical equalization. We've known for a long time that writing seemed to begin independently in at least three different places, and possibly four or five. In one of these places – southern Yucatan and northern Guatemala – writing seemed to start much later than in China or Mesopotamia, or Egypt or the Indus Valley. Now it appears that the earliest Central American writing may be just about as old as the earliest writing from other locations. Still, the oldest examples of full-fledged writing found anywhere on the planet only go back about 5,000 years. The strange notion that *everybody* should read and write is much more recent still.

All the earliest scripts are pictographic. In other words, writing always seems to grow out of drawing – but while all humans everywhere draw and make marks, and all humans everywhere speak complex and sophisticated languages, humans

have not usually put the two together. It appears that only those humans who build up elaborate and dense, more or less urbanized, agricultural societies start to draw pictures of their speech and end up with writing.

Anatomically modern humans have been living on earth for something like 2,000 centuries – 200,000 years – and the aptitude for language and for song is part of human neural as well as physical anatomy. So it's very likely that human beings have been talking, making up songs, and telling stories for the lifetime of our species: roughly 200,000 years. It would come as no surprise to some of us if painting, sculpture, and even flute-playing went back just as far. Writing doesn't go back nearly that far – but I'm convinced that literature does.

What happens if we look for the earliest examples of written literature? Time and again, we find them resting on an oral cushion. Choose any great literary tradition and follow it back to the earliest records. What you will find is not the beginning of literature but the boundary between the oral and the written. You will find works of great sophistication, such as the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, the *Beowulf*, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Poema del Cid*, the *Upanishads*. Did these big, complex, book-length poems become books only when they were finally written down? What were they before they were transcribed, if not oral books?

We don't know how long there have been humans in California, but when the first Europeans arrived, there were roughly 75 different languages being spoken in this region. Those languages belonged to seven different language families. There is no other state, province or region in North America where you could find such enormous linguistic variety. When the first Europeans arrived, the West Coast, from Alaska to California, had a much larger human population than the East Coast – a denser population than anywhere else north of the Valley of Mexico. It also had a much larger and much more various population of human languages than other parts of the continent, and the most densely populated part of the West Coast was California. Then as now, this was a place that attracted human beings.

Two thirds of the old California languages have vanished. No one speaks them anymore, and in many cases nothing is left except some word lists, and once in a while some Christian hymns or prayers translated into the language by early missionaries. Even where the languages do survive, their literatures have shrunk, because the world that fed the indigenous literatures has been so drastically changed and curtailed. But in the past, every Native American language had a thriving oral literature. Every one of them was rich with stories and songs. And

the stories fit together into chains or suites or cycles. Mythologies, we call them. Oral books. Whole libraries, kept alive by people without writing.

There are, by my count, at least twenty-six native California languages in which at least a part of the old oral library was transcribed, in the original, by a capable field linguist. So there are at least twenty-six California languages in which there is something of substance to read – something that no book written in Spanish or English will ever tell you. Twenty-six glimpses of precolonial thought and the precolonial world. In that world, books were never written – and they were never recited either. They were recreated, like jazz, each time the stories were told. This, you could say, was the oral equivalent of print on demand, except that every printing was different, as every jazz performance is different.

The work of transcribing these literatures started in the 1870s, when a linguist named Albert Gatschet took dictation from four good storytellers in the Klamath language, up around Tule Lake and Clear Lake. It continued in the first years of the twentieth century, when a linguist named Pliny Goddard worked with speakers of Kato, Hupa, Tolowa and Wailaki. In the same years, Roland Dixon worked with speakers of Shasta and Chimariko, and a bit further south, near the Feather River, with a brilliant Maidu myhteller whose name was Hants'ibuyim. Meanwhile, Edward Sapir – the greatest of all North American linguists – visited California and worked with the last speakers of Yana.

In 1913–14, Edward Gifford recorded some wonderful stories told by Thomas Williams in Tuolumne or Central Sierra Miwok. In the summer of 1927, Sapir came back to California and spent several very fruitful weeks with speakers of Hupa. John Peabody Harrington also worked in the 1920s with speakers of Karuk, and Dorothy Demetracopoulou with speakers of Wintu. Lucy Freeland and Jaime de Angulo also worked in the 1920s and into the 1930s with speakers of Achumawi and Pomo. Sometimes these meetings of storyteller and scribe were disfigured by haste or suspicion, and sometimes they were disfigured by lack of technical skill. But sometimes they were spectacularly successful. In at least six of the languages I've mentioned – Hupa, Karuk, Kato, Klamath, Maidu, and Wintu – there is a real body of literature captured in writing: a good, thick book, or several books, in desperate need of the kind of attention challenging books always require: good editing, good translation, and good publishing. In a seventh language, Tuolumne, there is a set of early acoustic recordings. These have been translated but never, so far as I know, transcribed. This is not an unusual situation in Native American literary studies: almost everywhere you look, you can find unfinished fieldwork as well as unpublished or poorly published texts of literary value. The University of California Press has devoted a

lot of paper and ink, and a lot of time and effort, to native California languages. Still, people who do linguistic work in scholarly settings are often skittish about literature. In the UC Press publications, indigenous literature is always dressed as linguistic data: something to study but not to read, or something to read but not to enjoy. Malcolm Margolin at Heyday Books in Berkeley has also published William Shipley's fine translations of the Maidu mythteller I mentioned, Hants'ibuyim. But the Heyday edition abides by the rules of trade instead of academic publishing: it omits the original text, and so makes really careful reading impossible. It's my hope that sometime in the second century of its life, the Book Club of California will tackle this problem head on, by starting a series of Literary Texts from Native California, printing everything we have in good, bilingual editions – perhaps one book a year for 26 years. It's not the sort of task that a university press or a trade press is likely to do well, but this Club could do it superbly.

IV

As we all know, trade and academic publishers are moving in treacherous waters these days. It's partly the problem I mentioned earlier: a widespread confusion about the relations of commerce and culture. And it's partly the uncertainty that comes with the spread of new media. Digital books are just as disembodied as oral books, and in some respects, they seem just as mutable. This has led some people, beginning decades ago with Marshall McLuhan, to say that we are experiencing a wholesale return to oral culture. I don't see it that way, myself. I've spent some time in genuine oral cultures, and I've spent half my life working daily with the literary legacy left by oral cultures that have lately disappeared. It seems to me that digital culture is something much different, with limitations and possibilities quite distinct from those of a genuine oral culture. But whatever digital culture is, it's enough to make publishers nervous.

I do not know, anymore than anyone else does, how the future of publishing will unfold. But since I understand the book to be a cultural universal, I believe that if the future has any room for humans, it will have room for books as well – lots of books. They may be mostly oral books, in a long-term, low-technology future, but I am willing to bet that some of them will also be the familiar material kind, written or printed, bound in codex form, which is likewise low-tech and long-term.

Besides the uncertainties of the future in the book world, there are the horrors of the recent past. In the last half century or so, both bookselling and publishing have also suffered a tidal wave of consolidation, confusing culture and commerce

in a terrifying way. Something similar has occurred in the printing industry, and the effects are easy to see. A hundred years ago, when there were no trade paperbacks, the trade journals written and read by American printers were full of interesting articles on typographic history, book design and type design, paper and binding, and on business ethics. Here in San Francisco, for example, in 1924 and 1925, the printer Charles Murdock published a seventeen-part history of California printing in the monthly journal *Pacific Printer and Publisher*. The same journal also ran several thoughtful essays by Edwin Grabhorn, and quite a few other things that were worth reading then and are still worth reading now, sixty or eighty years later. That enlightened and thoughtful atmosphere vanished in the Second World War. By 1950, the trade press of the American printing industry was a wasteland of industrial gossip and advertising. For the April 1951 issue of *Pacific Printer and Publisher*, the Berkeley printer Wilder Bentley wrote and printed a four-page insert in tribute to his teacher Porter Garnett (who had died the month before). Bentley's insert would stand out in almost any context, because Bentley was a genuine typographer. But in that devastated printscape, it stood out like an incunabulum on a remainder table or an aristocrat in a slum.

In 1901, the same Charles Murdock – a good printer himself and California's first real historian of printing – published an article in another trade journal, *The Western Printer*. His subject on this occasion was labor relations. Murdock was a successful and capable businessman, but hardly a tycoon. Yet he sounds, in 1901, quite a lot like his much wealthier contemporary, the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. This is part of what Murdock says:

We must moderate our greed, raise our standard of business, honor and treat our employees, our customers and one another with fairness. Only so can we get out of the wilderness and gain that self-respect which, if not success, is better than success.

This is noticeably different from Ivan Boesky's famous commencement address to the UC School of Business in 1986, which centered on the theme, "Greed is all right.... You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself."

Consolidated industries depend on homogenization, which often succeeds for a time in the cultural sphere but always fails in the longer term. Publishing at the present time is uncertain and confused because readers themselves, on the whole, are uncertain and confused. But that uncertainty and confusion is a sign of hope: it means that readers are refusing to homogenize.

One way to proceed in these conditions is for groups of like-minded, relatively unconfused people to step forward and publish some of the things they want and

need. My guess is that literate associations such as the Book Club of California can – and in fact may have to – play a much more active role in publishing during the next few decades.

One of your sister organizations, the Sierra Club (which is, incidentally, 120 years old this year) has already shown how well this can work. David Brower, during his long stint as executive director of the Sierra Club in the 1950s and 1960s, had a number of rows with his board of trustees, and then a very public row with his old friend Ansel Adams. But in the process, he invented a whole new kind of book, and opened up a whole new branch of publishing. If someone ever writes a proper history of publishing in California – another thing I hope this Club will someday publish – the story of Brower, Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and the Sierra Club will be one important chapter.

V

It seems to me that great publishers, printers, and writers – great artists and makers of any kind – are always driven by something more than just the desire to do what they're doing, or the desire to play around. If they weren't, writing and publishing would be no more rewarding than making money. There must be people in this room who knew Saul Marks, the superb Polish-American printer who founded the Plantin Press on Maple Avenue in Los Angeles in 1931, and who ran it until he died in 1974. Marks wrote a lovely little essay about the sixteenth-century printer and publisher for whom his press was named, Christophe Plantin. He has some interesting things to say in that essay about motivation:

That many of Plantin's books are handsome and some extraordinarily beautiful is only incidental to the basic intellectual honesty and great sincerity of their printer. For it is doubtful that the making of beautiful books was his chief aim. Rather, he was fascinated with the magic of words, which seemed to him "an approximation of immortality."

One of Marks's contemporaries was the photographer Ansel Adams, whom I mentioned a moment ago as David Brower's sparring partner. Adams is another important figure in the history of the book in California. He wrote only a little, he rarely served as a publisher, and the only printing he ever did was in the darkroom. But Adams explored the conceptual realm of the photographic book as no one ever had before. He was constantly working to build individual images into larger emotional and intellectual structures – books, in other words: synthetic worlds that are small enough to carry in your hand and yet large enough to get lost in. He wrote about this in the preface to a portfolio he published in

1948. His words were handset and printed, incidentally, by his friends Edwin and Robert Grabhorn:

To photograph truthfully and effectively is to see beneath the surface and record the qualities of nature and humanity which live or are latent in all things. Impression is not enough. Design, style, technique – these, too, are not enough. Art must reach further than impression or self-revelation.

Carl Purlington Rollins was not a Californian, but he was a conscientious printer and an insightful writer on the craft – and Rollins put it this way: “A book is not a book when you cannot see the text for the technique.”

I have a hunch that in their origins, books are every bit as close to what Adams was doing with his camera as they are to what Carl Rollins and the Taylors and the Grabhorns were doing with their presses. In the beginning, it seems to me, we imprint our thought on the landscape around us. This requires nothing that looks like writing – no alphabet, syllabary, or hieroglyphs, no script of any kind – but it does involve a material substrate: the earth itself. We deposit our thoughts, our memories, our stories, into the land in which we live, and then we read them from the land in which we’ve placed them for safekeeping. We learn to read them back to ourselves from the shape of a hill, the curve of a river, the call of a winter wren or a Steller’s jay or a raven, or the shape of an old tree. I think of this process as the nameless act that underlies all serious writing. And I think we do have to distinguish here between at least two kinds of writing. I wouldn’t call them serious and unserious so much as potentially timeless and timebound. Writing in the timebound and utilitarian sense grows out of game-playing and the keeping of accounts. The oldest examples of script ever found are of that kind – partly practical, partly trivial. But wherever that kind of writing takes hold, people seem to notice that the script creates an artificial landscape. Sooner or later, they try speaking to writing in more or less the same way they have spoken to the land – and find that writing can remember, with some precision, what they’ve said. It’s a short step, really, from there to the folding, handmade landscapes of moveable type. The book has taken refuge in those folding landscapes so often and so successfully that we now call them books instead of codices, and some of us have difficulty believing that books could take other material (or immaterial) forms.

VI

I'd like to return now, briefly, to a subject I mentioned earlier: how much has happened in California printing since it began, in the mid nineteenth century. One of the best of the early California printers was a man named Édouard Bosqui, a French Canadian who came to San Francisco from Montreal in 1850 because he was looking for adventure. Bosqui was 18 years of age when he arrived. Reinventing himself as Edward or Eduardo as the circumstances required, he soon got involved in just about everything – banking, gold mining, real estate, cattle ranching. He was one of the founders of the California Academy of Sciences, the San Francisco Art Association, and the Bohemian Club. After more than a decade in San Francisco, he also got involved in bookbinding, then in letterpress printing and engraving. When another decade had gone by, he added color lithography to his enterprise. To Bosqui these were businesses rather than crafts. He was a manager, not a pressman or compositor or typographer, but he recognized craftsmanship, and valued it, and he probably did more for the printed book than anyone else in California in his time.

The best study of Bosqui's work was written in the early 1940s by Gregg Anderson. The opening sentences may give you some idea why I think Anderson is the finest of all California critics of printing:

To anyone looking for a period when printing was at its lowest ebb, the middle nineteenth century would be worthy of serious attention.... San Francisco in the 1860s was far removed from the centers of culture, but not from their influence. Its scores of printers were able to produce work just as hideous as the best in Boston or New York.... To find at such a time and place a printer who preserved a sense of balance and restrained good taste is so much an exception, that further consideration of his work is called for.

That is exactly Edward Bosqui's principal merit. In a time and place where printing was generally bad, he was less bad than anybody else. He printed comfortably in English, French, and Spanish – and not quite so comfortably in Russian and Chinese – from the mid 1860s until roughly 1910. Anderson thought he observed a slow and fairly steady decline in quality over this period. To me, Bosqui's record seems more erratic than that, but at any rate, there is nothing you could call relentless progress. His 280-page autobiography, published in 1904, barely mentions printing. Yet the best books produced in Bosqui's shop are, I

think, among the best pieces of printing produced in Western North America before the twentieth century.

Gregg Anderson, who was born in 1908, orphaned as a child, and raised by an aunt in Pasadena, never became the great printer he was preparing himself to be. But before he was killed in Normandy in 1944, he had done about everything a young man could to learn the craft. He had worked at the Huntington Library, handling large numbers of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century books; he had been tutored by Porter Garnett, who ran the Laboratory Press at Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh; and he had curated, for the Huntington, an exhibition of the work of Daniel Berkeley Updike's Merrymount Press. He had also worked with the Grabhorns in San Francisco, with Ward Ritchie in Los Angeles, and with Harold Hugo at Meriden Gravure in Connecticut. Printing was the center of his world, and he wrote about the subject with remarkable grace and subtlety. If I may, I'd like to suggest that the Book Club of California also publish, sometime soon, the collected writings of Gregg Anderson. It would be a slim volume but one of permanent value.

I've already confessed my suspicion that organizations such as the Club may soon be playing a more important role as publishers. Once upon a time, publishing, like banking, was a profession that promised the chance of making some money while contributing enormously to the public good. But publishers, like bankers, have sometimes found it difficult to balance these two goals. Trade publishing has become more and more closely focused on marketing, while academic publishing has grown, I would say, increasingly bipolar – highly self-obsessed and ritualized on one side and, on the other side, increasingly inclined to imitate the trade. Splendid books are still published in both realms, but many worthy books are also turned away because they fit with neither one of these uncomplementary systems. Editorial standards have fallen across the board, while design and production standards have scattered all over the map. In short, the profession has been, to a large extent, deprofessionalized. Electronic publishing is sprouting in this unhealthy soil. For now at least, electronic publishers rarely generate new titles; they are engaged in reselling the backlist. But they are full and active participants in the continuing degradation of the book as a physical entity – a process that goes back to the nineteenth century and earlier, as Gregg Anderson implied.

This is why I think books and authors may have to depend more heavily on associations of people whose prime concerns are quality and content: people who don't especially need or want best-seller lists or ad campaigns to tell them what to read, and who value reading enough that they want their books well written, well edited, well designed, and physically well made.

For those of us addicted to paper and ink, e-books are apt to provoke more pity than admiration. Yet as people who care about books, I think we ought to wish them well and assist them where we can. They are the natural successors to cheap paperbacks: the epitome of the *unfine* book. But most readers of my generation were raised on a steady diet of cheap paperbacks and are fervently grateful for the experience. We read Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, Flaubert, Melville, Charles Darwin, Arthur Eddington, Igor Stravinsky, Erwin Panofsky, and Henry David Thoreau in this form – as well as Henry Miller, Gary Snyder, and Allen Ginsberg – and that reading changed our lives. Most of us could not have bought the books and would probably never have seen them if they had been published only in handsome, expensive editions. If some of us have learned, over time, to cherish fine books, and to make them, it is chiefly because we learned, back then, from those dirt-cheap editions, that many books *deserved* to be fine. It is likely to be the e-book that performs this unintended service for the coming generation. If so, then the e-book too will become, for a time, as the paperback did, an essential vector of culture.

Type itself, and the book itself, seem to me as healthy as ever. Some of the best books ever written are being written now, and some of the best type ever made is being made right now. (Quite a lot of it, by the way, is being made in California.) What appears to be unhealthy is our society's *relationship* to the book – and to the letterforms that carry books through time. It is unhealthy at the moment because of overcommercialization. But I am not sure there has ever been a time when the relations between humans and their books were not in some way or another disturbed or afflicted. If that's the case, then this is a problem, like mortality, which we are never going to solve. But that's quite fine. I don't suppose associations such as this Book Club exist for the purpose of making everything perfect, but just for the purpose of making things better rather than worse. A precocious young printer named Adrian Wilson wrote about this very perceptively back in 1948, when he was 24 years old. "It is still my purpose," he said, "to make people read less better, instead of more faster." That is what fine books are for.

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ROBERT BRINGHURST

Ask any expert to name the most important book on typography published in the last half century and the answer is likely to be Robert Bringhurst's *The Elements of Typographic Style*. First published in 1992, that book will celebrate its twentieth anniversary this fall with a revised and enlarged fourth edition. But to others, Bringhurst is most important as a poet, or as a scholar and translator of Native American oral literature. He has spent his life with books and languages, holding major fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Philosophical Society, and other organizations. He was also recently Witter Bynner Fellow in Poetry at the Library of Congress. A native Angelino, he has lived for many years on an island off the British Columbia coast. He recently edited *The Scythe and the Rabbit: Simon de Colines and the Culture of the Book in Renaissance Paris*.

Serendipity

Al Nalbandian at The Club.

MONDAY NIGHT AT THE BOOK CLUB on August 27, 2012 featured Al Nalbandian, now a proud 91, wife Aida, daughters Elizabeth and Louise, other family, and piles of ancient books and exquisite watercolors of ancient churches by Aida's father, Hovaness Assadourian.

The Nalbandians, as proprietors of the oldest flower stands in San Francisco, brightened the Club rooms with festive flowers of pink, blue, and white. For the hospitality hour prior to the presentation, Elizabeth Nice, a nice friend of the Club and the Gleeson Library, nicely donated brioche tea sandwiches and baked delicious Armenian-style biscotti.

Jay Zil and Bo Wreden, who wrote the *Quarterly's* lead article on Nalbandian, arranged the appearance of this animated Armenian. His collective sleuthing equals that of the book hound Glen Miranker, who exhibited at the Club last summer.

Armenia has been a thoroughfare for invaders going east and west. In 301, St. Gregory the Illuminator made Armenia the first Christian nation in the world, while in 406, St. Mesrop Mashtots introduced its alphabet. Wherever war and migration sent Armenians, whether west into Europe or east into India and

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China, they carried their religion and writing. Our Book Club centennial year of 2012 additionally celebrates a half millennium of Armenian printing.

In 1978, the *National Geographic* featured Nalbandian and his friend Bill Saroyan as “Proud Armenians.” Right it was. Many of the Club’s guests at the event were Armenian, coming to see their heritage. Among them were Nalbandian’s “shirt-tail cousin,” Judge Tomar Mason, retired from the California Superior Court; two collectors and relatives of Saroyan, Charles and Bruce Janigian; and another prominent Saroyan collector, our own Jay Zil. All knew, as Nalbandian averred, that “Religion and the Printing Press were decisive for Armenia’s survival and enough to identify the Armenian nation.”

Although small in stature, Nalbandian is huge in his drive to preserve his heritage. “I rejoice that I am an Armenian and an American citizen,” he avers. “The world has to know what this small group of people have contributed to civilization.”

Nalbandian’s method of preservation, he decided early in life, would be through books. At Sutro Elementary School, he noticed a classmate always had one under his arm. One day, he offered him \$1 for the book, a lot of money then, and received Zane Grey’s *Wild Horse Mesa*. Nalbandian never read it, but he had a book. “You make your way in life, push and pull and off you go.”

In the 1960s, he visited Soviet Armenia, carrying hospital supplies. There was an equal demand for his catheters and copies of his ancient Armenian title pages. “I am a member of an ancient race,” says he, “of an ancient culture that was falling apart, suffering under oppression.” No effort is too small. “Everyone’s got to contribute something,” Nalbandian declares. He chose to “add to the welfare and pride of this little nation.”

Samples of those venerable printings that thrilled Armenians in the 1960s graced the table. Nalbandian began with a fat one, the Oskan Bible, the first complete Armenian language Bible (Amsterdam 1666). It featured wood block prints by Albrecht Dürer and Christophe van Sichem. Next came Cesare Vecellio’s *De gli Habiti Antichi et Moderni* (Venice, 1590) illustrating Armenian costume. A third that gave flavor to Nalbandian’s talk was Hakob Vardapet’s *Dictionarium Novum Latino-Armenium* (Rome, 1714), published by the Roman Catholic Church’s Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

At the end of the table lay a huge wrapped package, which daughter Elizabeth and husband Pat Malkassian have tripped over for twelve years; Nalbandian liked its labels, forms, and packaging, and besides, he had seen the original of the contents.

He revealed it contained a reproduction Bible, the *Codex Etchmiadzin* of 989 Anno Domini. Not only is it a cornerstone of the Armenian Church and a splendid example of Armenian writing, but it is their earliest illuminated manuscript. ADEVA (Akademische Druck - und Verlagsanstalt), specialists in Graz, Austria, printed 250 copies in 2000. Its publication rejoices at the arrival of St. Gregory seventeen hundred years ago.

As a special treat, Nalbandian announced we would get to see this great book. Al, Aida, Elizabeth, and Louise unwrapped this sumptuous folio so we could gaze upon its text and seventeen brilliant illuminations.

Nalbandian bugs book dealers constantly and makes a pest of himself. "Here's that fellow again," they say. "I've never given up," he declared. "Once you give up, you never see it again." This quest keeps Al Nalbandian young, vigorous, and inquisitive. May more ancient Armenian printing come to him!

Crichton at The Club

IN 1888, EDWARD BELLAMY published a utopian novel, *Looking Backward* set in the year 2000. John Crichton, speaking to a joint meeting of the Book Club and the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America on September 10, 2012, also ended his backward looking in the new millennium. That now past-President Crichton may transform "Looking Backward: The Bay Area Antiquarian Book Trade, 1850-2000" into a Book Club keepsake, we briefly entice.

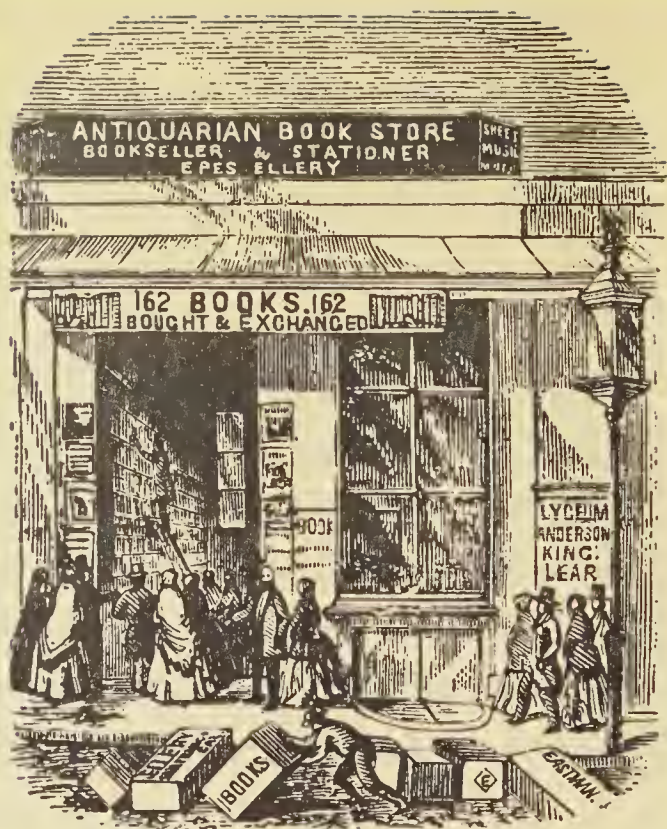
His illustrations, 160 splendid ones, came from the California Historical Society, the San Francisco Public Library, and collector and Club member Bruce Shyer.

Crichton led with John Hamilton Still, who exemplified the toughness of California booksellers. On May 6, 1850, two days after being burnt out, he announced: "STILL ALIVE—At No. 6, Pine Street."

Epes Ellery in 1854 established the first self-identified Antiquarian Book Store in San Francisco. "Just received by clippers and mail, a new assortment of OLD and NEW BOOKS—some very rare," he advertised. "The public are invited to call, as we purchase, exchange and loan Books, on all subjects."

Ellery closed proclaiming, "Come one, come all!" Yet at the end of a decade, people had not come. Ellery complained of too few books and too high rents as he began closing shop in December 1863. After another money-losing venture promoting the Reese River silver mines modestly monikered Ellery and Antiquarian, Ellery solved his rent problem: he went into real estate.

Anton Roman, who made a fortune selling books in Shasta County, became the first San Franciscan to publish catalogues, which he did in 1860 and 1861. As creative California writers blossomed in the 1860s, Roman began publishing them.



The Old Book Shop of John Howell in the Liberal Arts Building
Panama-Pacific International Exposition

EPES ELLERY BILLHEAD VIGNETTE. Epes Ellery ran the first Antiquarian Book Shop on Washington Street just above Montgomery. The nearby Lyceum Theater performed *King Lear* on November 5, 1858 as Harrison Eastman prepared this stunning wood engraving of Ellery's shop carrying the dramatic playbill.

HOWELL BROCHURE. John Howell — Books at the Panama Pacific International Exhibition in 1915 was emblematic of the architecturally designed edifices that Howell and Paul Elder used to revive and revitalize the post-earthquake book trade.

Noteworthy are Bret Harte's *Outcroppings* (1866), the first anthology of California verse, and Charles Warren Stoddard's *Poems* (1867), the former printed by Crydon A. Alvord of New York and the latter by Edward Bosqui. In 1868, Roman bankrolled the famed *Overland Monthly*, but in the 1880s, he followed Ellery's business model. He, too, went into real estate.

As the witty David Magee quipped later, being an antiquarian bookseller was a very agreeable way to make very little money. Throughout the late nineteenth century, San Francisco hosted sixty competitive booksellers of all types.

Contemporary to Roman was Hubert Howe Bancroft, bookseller, publisher, proprietor of the History Factory, and collector of 65,000 books and 100,000 manuscripts. Among booksellers who approached Bancroft in omnivorism was Patrick Joseph Healy. His huge bookstore, known as "The Tunnel," specialized in heretofore neglected pamphlets. He specifically advertised, "Books and Magazines Related to California a Specialty."

The brutal 1906 fire more than halved the number of bookshops, but Robert E. Cowan, heir to Healy, persevered. As collecting interested him more than



BANCROFT LETTERHEAD. The Gold Rush fame of bookseller Hubert Howe Bancroft resonates today through the magnificence of his collection.

selling, he catalogued his collections, and in 1914, the first publication of the Book Club of California was Cowan's *Bibliography of the History of California*.

As Crichton noted, Cowan was seminal. Ubiquitous Club member Gary Kurutz has expounded on Cowan's legacy thrice: First in a 1993 Club leaf book; secondly at the UCLA Library Associates Ninth Annual [Lawrence Clark] Powell Society Dinner on November 3, 2011; and most recently on October 19 at the Club's Centennial Symposium, WAY OUT WEST.

UCLA Librarian and Club member Gary Strong commissioned Pat Reagh to print a thousand copies, letterpress, of Kurutz's 2011 talk, "Sir Robert E. Cowan and the Genesis of the UCLA Library California Collection." Facile and fluid, informative and entertaining, it is Kurutz at his best.

Owner, publisher, and artist Paul Elder and his manager, John Howell, midwived the rebirth of San Francisco bookselling, Crichton continued, at the same time the city was reborn. Within stylish shops designed by Bernard Maybeck that reeked of heavy grandeur, they sold to gentlemen bibliophiles who established the Book Club in 1912, published widely, and encouraged printers, such as the Grabhorns, to settle in San Francisco.

Bookmen trained younger bookmen and their shops became as notable for the personalities of their proprietors as they were for their stock. Beginning in the 1930s, William P. Wreden, with a "flair," made pamphlets and trade catalogues respectable, while in the 1960s, John Swingle, in the Alta California Bookstore in Berkeley, did the same for ephemera.

Yet, the old bookstores began to die off in the 1970s. The closing of John Howell Books, with the death of imperial Warren Howell in 1984, was a milestone. That year, Crichton sponsored a family tree broadside with forty-three branches of offshoot booksellers that resembles the "begats" of the Bible. Guests received the sixty remaining copies.

Book Party 229

ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, a packed Club admired advance copies of *William Reagh: A Long Walk Downtown: Photographs of Los Angeles & Southern California, 1936-1991*. Present was essayist Michael Dawson, son of Muir and nephew of Glen of the famed 1905 Dawson's Book Shop. The typesetting Reaghs were reaghly out in full force: son and printer Patrick Reagh, sister Kathy, cousin Arlene, wife Maxine, and their youngest daughter Molly.

Once Alder Reagh bluntly told his son William Reagh (1911-1992) that he had no sense of history. Bill determined to prove Dad wrong. As a graphic artist for an engineering firm, he had a good eye. Shaped by the Great Depression, Reagh fought for the proletariat and, imbibed of the "Ash Can School" of art, determined to record daily life of common people, and, in Reagh's case, the changing landscape of Los Angeles. "This town is like a movie set," Reagh once said. "Things are put up and taken down very quickly."

Michael Dawson set the theme in his essay: Reagh was "Contesting Erasure." Often, Bill would go to the same place and shoot from the same angle; in some instances, he recorded change over thirty years. Pat organized the book moving geographically through Los Angeles over time, hence it is "a long walk downtown." Most of the photographs are architectural, but people fascinated Reagh. They are "often the unknown and downtrodden," Pat said. His father was "celebrating the uncelebrated," the "odd balls," and his photographs are "away from the comfort zone."

Young Pat grew up in Los Angeles in the 1950s, an idyllic time, when Los Angeles still had neighborhoods and telephone prefixes indicated a person's economic class. Venders selling milk, bread, Good Humor bars, and vegetables were part of daily life, while the Italian peddler and handyman was a necessity. Yellow Cars delivered young Pat locally, while Red Cars took him further out. At age nine, Pat began going with his father on his Saturday photography trips. On Saturday night, Bill photographed his three kids (Pat was born between two sisters) to use up film.

In the mid-1980s, admirers urged Bill Reagh to share his photographs and following his death, Gary Kurutz of the California State Library bought 40,000 of Reagh's prints and 250 of his notebooks. These daybooks, filled with usually sixty photographs, always began with a self portrait, usually in a reflection. Pat shared a few with the assembled.

The Los Angeles Public Library has placed 850 photographs online, and Reagh's memory survives vibrantly in the William Reagh Los Angeles Photography Center.

Run by the Grupo de Teatro Sinergia it is the only community photography laboratory in town.

This book was a long time coming. In 1959 at eleven, his father gave Pat a tabletop press and together they formed the “Mustard Seed Press.” Pat learned basics and deadlines as an advertising typographer, honed his artistic imagination as a jazz pianist, and learned fine printing with Lillian Marks at the Plantin Press. He bought its equipment in 1981 and, with tons of iron and lead, “printer’s impedimenta” moved to Sebastopol in 1995. With the press of family, fine printing, and job work, the book languished.

In the 1980s, our then-President John Crichton bought an admired Reagh print, so in April 2011 he called up Michael Dawson to see if he had any Southern California photography projects. Memories of his friend and mentor Bill Reagh surfaced immediately to join with Pat’s long held desire to create a book. Pat spent six months scanning 2,500 of his father’s best images and an equal amount of time with Dawson pruning them to 130.

As it is so personal, this book became the most challenging, and urgent in Pat’s printing career. Through it, he became proud of what his father had done.

When the Publications Committee asked for Dawson’s essay to be set letterpress, Pat spurned polymer plates, which he pioneered. He would be archaic. He would use hot metal produced by his typesetting machine. Therefore, Pat quipped, “any broken letters or twisted serifs are intentional.”

Buy now! *A Long Walk Downtown* is going fast. On August 15, 2012, Executive Director Lucy Cohen got her first Book Club “tweet” at 1 A.M. It was connected to a Los Angeles blog on Reagh’s book and she sold four copies that day. The special edition of fifty is gone. The regular edition is yours for \$225. It is a REAGHLY reaghmarkable book—twice over. P@ says so.

In Los Angeles on November 3, the Club hosted 110 guests and sold over twenty copies of *A Long Walk Downtown*. “Having grown up here, I know that so often what I remember about the city,” Lynell George blogged after the Los Angeles Public Library event, “has become so vague that it might as well be vapor.” Reagh’s “photographs are so critical in reanimating that past and remind us who we were,” she continued. “He had such an incredible eye, a sense of place, and deep, deep sense of purpose.” Reagh photographed the city that his “parents had talked about. I wanted to crawl into those frames and walk around a little, peek into those windows.”

Reaghly, the Club keeps producing fine books. Author Claudine Chalmers presented the Book Club’s Book 230, *Paul Frenzeny’s Chinatown Sketches* (\$125),

containing sketches collected from *Harper's Weekly* in the 1870s, to a large party at the California Historical Society on Symposium Friday. Thanks to Jonathan Clark, our independent observer pronounced, "It looks very good, with silk spine, large enough format, acrobats acrobating throughout, and all very nice."

The Club at Its Centennial Symposium

OUR SYMPOSIUM, which occurred between October 18 and 20 while we were speechifying in the glorious hill country of Fredericksburg, Texas, home of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas wines, German beer, and beautiful dressed limestone buildings, was a "spectacular" success. One of our corps of reporters pronounced that "the symposium went over really well. Lucy and her staff [including, of course, Centennial Co-Chairs Anne Smith and Curtiss Taylor, and Symposium Chair Peter Koch, and Roberto Trujillo] did a terrific job. Nice turn out and well organized. It impressed a lot of people I talked to."

Another rejoiced, "It was a lot of fun." A third declared: "All the talks were five-star and terrific. The turnout was great. People seemed relaxed and unpretentious. To quote John Henry Nash, [the subject of Jonathan Clark's talk], all were there 'for the joy of doing.'" As proof that "lead ain't dead," a fourth enthused, "It was great to meet Jonathan Clark, Peter Koch, and a couple of great young printers."

There were a number of students in attendance. One from Mills College praised, "I had the best time at the symposium on Friday and know my classmates did as well. We were thrilled to be involved and everyone seems to have a new sense of inspiration and enthusiasm this week in our classes. The breadth of quality in all aspects of the symposium were outstanding. I was bowled over by the lusciousness of the paper on which the news-letter was printed and was humbled by the receptiveness of the presenters to communication."

"The cruise on the U.S.S. *Potomac* was the best field trip of my life," one guest proclaimed, while another detailed: "It was a high fog that Saturday morning but not too cold and we really got a view of the bridges. We went south from the Ferry Building and under the Bay Bridge [that is, the Emperor Norton Bridge] and then around Yerba Buena Island under the new bridge section, along Treasure Island and Alcatraz, up to the Golden Gate, under that bridge and around to Sausalito. Great talks at the Mill Valley theatre too."

AcCOUNT of the Symposium

THE 3 DAY SOLD-OUT Book Club of California Centennial Symposium, *WAR OUT WEST, Fine Printing and the Cultural History of the Book in California* featured 27 speakers, 14 individual presentations, and 4 panels on 31 subjects—ranging from the education of the CA printer to the future of the book. 128 guests from 8 U.S. states and 44 towns in California eagerly attended. 312 Sutter Street served as headquarters for the event; 2 days-worth of presentations were held at the World Affairs Council, while a pop-up bookstore featuring the work of 15 presses, book artists, and authors featured in the Symposium stayed open in the Clubrooms. In all, Symposium activity spanned 9 historic venues in the Bay Area, including 142 Throckmorton Theater in Mill Valley; The SF Public Library, and The Commonwealth Club, where Robert Bringhurst gave 1 fine keynote address. The U.S.S. *Potomac* (FDR's 76-year-old presidential yacht) was our vessel for a sail under 2 bridges, with commentary by Bay Area Bridge Architect Donald MacDonald. At a publication party for the Club's 230th book, *Paul Frenzeny's Chinatown Sketches*, at The California Historical Society, 17 of Frenzeny's original illustrations from *Harper's Weekly* were on display. Guests ate 80 slices of birthday "book" cake at the Gala Dinner at the City Club, and pulled 50 prints by Rik Olson at The San Francisco Center for the Book. Some facts we learned along the way: when the first Europeans arrived in the region of California, there were roughly 75 different languages being spoken; printing was taught in California as early as 1917; there are at least 58 printers in California who have been printing for over 25 years.

We offer our 29 volunteers, 54 Centennial Partners, 15 BCC Directors, 4 BCC Staff, and of course the presenters and attendees COUNTLESS thanks for helping us celebrate our Centennial with such an extraordinary event. Here's to the next 100 years!

Gone from Our Gaze

W. MICHAEL MATHES

On August 13, long time member and Oscar Award winner W. MICHAEL MATHES (1936-2012) went home to his first love, Queen Calafia. Throughout life, he embraced her in her magnificent magnitude, from Nootka Sound to Cabo San Lucas. For Mathes, a divided California was an impossibility.

"Mike was an original and will be long remembered, but not easily replaced," declared David Rubiales, who spoke at the Oscar Lewis Award ceremony. "I first met him in 1969 at the University of San Francisco as my graduate advisor. Very

lucky indeed was anyone whom he counted as a friend. He was a great scholar, a wonderful conversationalist, and perhaps most importantly, generous to others.”

Born in Los Angeles, Mathes found his true home south of the border either in desolate Baja California or various Mexican archives. Trips to Spanish repositories quickly followed, and 1962 found him as a librarian at the University of New Mexico working on his doctorate in history.

1966 brought its completion and a teaching position at the University of San Francisco. In 1979, State Librarian Ethel Crocket, in later years the gracious queen of the Club’s hospitality, made Mathes Honorary Curator of Mexicana at the Sutro Library. As a bibliophile, historian, and librarian, he paid to have relevant California documents microfilmed from Spanish and Mexican archives and given to California institutions.

Mike Mathes lived a life of passion: strongly for, mightily opposed; a devoted friend, implacable foe, and always charming to the ladies. The history, people, and land of Baja California consumed his life. He explored the terrain, knew ethnology and archaeology, and sought all records wherever hiding. He loved to expound on all subjects and more.

One adventure of much married Mike’s led to a boon to Mexican researchers. Escaping California’s community property law in the early 1990s, Mike spirited away a library of 45,000 volumes. The Biblioteca Mathes miraculously appeared as a gift to El Colegio de Jalisco in Zapopan.

In spite of the mysterious disappearance of that library, in 1993 Mike appeared in Plainview for all to see. His Lone Star ancestors had been equally as visible. The conservative political views of that fine Texas town meshed with his and he built another library of comparable magnitude.

With a great command of the Spanish language from the sixteenth century to the present, and the expert on Pacific Coast maritime exploration, an admirer without exaggeration wrote that Mathes was “an incredibly productive writer in Spanish and English.”

Naturally, Mathes received the top awards from the Bancroft Library, California Historical Society, the Gleeson Library Associates, and, of course, The Book Club of California. What humbled Mathes most were the greatest honors Mexico and Spain could give writers, artists, and patriots. He received the Order of the Aztec Eagle in 1985 and the Order of Isabel la Catolica in 2005. Huzzah for Miguel!

Among the English language writings of W. Michael Mathes are [Sebastián] Vizcaíno and Spanish Expansion in the Pacific Ocean, 1580-1630 (1968; Mike’s dissertation); *The Missions of Baja California, 1683-1849* (1977); *Mexico on Stone*

(1984; Y'all had better know the publisher); *The Americas' First Academic Library: Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (1985), based on holdings in the Sutro Library as recounted in a Summer 1980 QN-L article; *The Early Exploration of the Pacific Coast* (1997); *Illustration in Colonial Mexico: Woodcuts and Copper Engravings in New Spain, 1539-1821* (2001); *The Forgotten War: The Conflict Between Mexico and the United States* (2003; With Gary Kurutz); *The Russian-American Frontier* (2008); and *The Land of Calafia: A Brief History of Peninsular California, 1533-1848* (2009).

In process of publication is his eighteen-hundred-page bibliography of Mexico's tumultuous period of the early 1820s.

For lengthy, heart-felt tributes, see Gary Kurutz, *California State Library Foundation Bulletin*, (No. 104, 2012) and Brian D. Dillon, *California Territorial Quarterly* (No. 91, Fall 2012)

ANN ROSENER

Last spring ANN ROSENER (1914-2012) departed to the art colony in the sky. At Smith College, the *Chronicle* reported on June 6, she became "a staunch liberal and an independent thinker. There she discovered a love of poetry, an abiding interest in photography, and an appreciation of type on paper." Photography



Coriander Reisbord

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came to the fore during World War II, during which she “took striking photos highlighting the sudden breakthrough of women in industry” and then worked for *Life* magazine.

In the 1950s, Rosener’s third interest manifested itself when she became a graphic designer at the Stanford University Museum of Art, and in 1977 she founded her Occasional Works press. Its product harkened back to her first passion, poetry. She published Julian Bell, Constantine Cavafy, Thom Gunn, and others. Rosener appeared at Book Club functions, our library has a few occasional works, and in fall 2013 Mills College will showcase her talents as printer, designer, and photographer.

TYRUS GEORGE HARMSSEN

TYRUS GEORGE HARMSSEN (1924-2012) was born to be a star: his diamond-enthralled father named him for Ty Cobb and George “Babe” Ruth. Yet, books, not baseball, would be his destiny. When he was a twenty-year-old soldier fighting in the European theater, Glen Dawson sponsored Harmsen’s entry in the Club, where rationing did not constrain Type Lice from SNAFU-ing the *QN-L*. The Winter 1944 issue spelled his surname “Hermsen.”

Afterwards in library school at the University of Michigan, Harmsen wrote a paper on the Grabhorn Press using information from the Club. In 1948, the *QN-L* had the honor of publishing his first article and republishing it in our preceding Centennial Symposium issue. Harmsen went on to be the Head Librarian at Occidental College from 1959 to 1986, ran its Book Arts program until 1991, and occasionally printed short pieces at his Juniper Press.

In 1982, Harmsen spoke about his “Forty Years of Book Collecting” and an update would add thirty more in his quest for “the well-printed book.” The Pasadena resident’s thirty-two writings followed the same theme. Among them are pages on poet Robinson Jeffers and Southern California printers Saul and Lillian Marks, Ward Ritchie, and Joseph Arnold Foster, head of the Scripps College Press (1946-1971). A longtime member of the Zamorano Club, Harmsen served as its President from 1987 to 1988 and edited its magazine for ten years.

Harmsen ended his 1982 talk with words to be remembered: “This hobby, this mania known as book collecting, has been the source of many hours of pleasure, and I close with a double salute to all of the fine printers, past and present, for printing the books we cherish; and to the antiquarian booksellers, who are so instrumental in making available to collectors and libraries the books we choose to purchase for our selves.”

Excelsior!

If I were punish-ed
For every pun I've shed,
You would not build a puny shed
Over my pun-ished head.

ALAS FOR Y'ALL. My replacement in the wings, winged it, took wings, and left us still perched upon the editorial tripod.

We do not get to all programs and would appreciate reports. The Club plans good talks which attendees enjoy and we wish to pass their delight to our readers.

ROBERT J. CHANDLER

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